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Footnotes

The Newsletter of FPRI's Wachman Center Teaching Military History— Why and How: A History Institute for Teachers

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On September 29-30, 2007, FPRI's **Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education** presented a weekend of discussion on **Teaching Military History: Why and How** for 35 teachers from 22 states across the country, held at the First Division Museum in Wheaton, Illinois and co-sponsored by the Cantigny First Division Foundation. Additional participants logged in for the webcast from around the country and the world. See www.fpri.org for videocasts and texts of lectures.

The **History Institute for Teachers** is co-chaired by **David Eisenhower** and **Walter A. McDougall**. Core support for the History Institute is provided by The Annenberg Foundation; additional support for this conference was provided by FPRI trustees W. W. Keen Butcher, Robert L. Freedman, Bruce H. Hooper, and John M. Templeton, Jr. The next history weekends are: China's Encounter with the West, March 1-2, 2008, to be held at and co-sponsored by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; and America in the Civil War Era, May 17-18, 2008, to be held at and co-sponsored by Carthage College. McDougall's book *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829-1877*, will be published in March by HarperCollins, and complimentary signed copies will be distributed to participating teachers.

Why Teach Military History?

FPRI Senior Fellow **Jeremy Black** of the University of Exeter addressed the frequent criticism that teaching military history somehow encourages bellicosity. In fact, just war properly conceived is an appropriate recourse in international law; it has played a major role in the formation of individual states and societies and needs to be understood.

Resources for teaching students about military history include museums such as the First Division Museum, with their collections of the material culture of war; photographic and film archives; and interviews, both filmed and taped. Students can also record living history themselves with people who lived through wars. Students should also be encouraged to try to understand conflicts from the other side's perspective.

Too often history is taught as if it is a linear, inevitable process. But people at the time had no sense of inevitability. Allied soldiers and generals in WWI, for instance, were unsure what the consequences of the collapse of Russia would be for them. Students need to appreciate that what happens is not determined, and that we all need to take part in unfolding processes.

Common historical memories frame national identity. Thus even if people use events from the past in flawed ways—e.g., applying the Munich 1938 analogy of appeasement in different contexts—this reflects the need to explain things with reference to a common memory. This is acutely important in the case of war, where citizens are asked to endure great sacrifices. Historical memories can help to make people feel that however difficult this is, it is a necessary purpose.

Military history is not just operational history; there is also the relationship between war and the development of states. The U.S. arose as a result of a war of independence; through war it expanded from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and it was the Civil War that created the country we know. It is also through war that the relationships among states have been molded and influenced.

War and society covers a wide range of topics such as women in war and war and environment. One can also consider the military itself as a society, and explore war and culture. One can show the triumphalist (e.g., Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory*) as well as the later critical (e.g., Picasso's *Guernica*) accounts of war, juxtaposing the latter with an account from the *Times* of the bombing and a German propaganda piece claiming that Guernica was never bombed.

It is also tremendously valuable for students in the West to understand that much of the war in the world is not a matter of Western powers but is in South Asia or subsaharan Africa. Students need to understand what tribalism or ethnic conflict mean, if they are to understand the world in which they live, and that these pose real questions for the U.S. and other powers as to how to respond. Teaching military history is thus a key element of civic education.

Teaching About War in the Ancient World

Kimberly Kagan of the **Institute for the Study of War** noted that the study of war cannot be divorced from the study of policy or politics. War is a product of states, organizations, armies, institutions, and individuals interacting with one another and with enemies in order to accomplish an overarching political objective.

War is a human, not a technical, phenomenon. War is about making decisions in crisis. Ancient warfare of course differs from modern warfare, but both involve the individuals who compose the states, make decisions, or formulate policy. What policymakers decide at home determines the mission abroad, which a commander translates into concrete objectives his subordinates can execute.

Students often bring into contemporary studies various political prejudices; the ancient world provides a laboratory for studying war in a value-neutral environment. The ancient world is full of wonderful sources for studying war: Polybius, Herodotus, Thucydides, Caesar's commentaries. The ancient historians not only studied their specific eras, but also the general phenomena of war, societies, states, and decision-making. They are provocative, full of details and examples of the nature of command and decision-making. Moreover, because warfare in the ancient world was in some ways simpler than war is today—not because of the lack of technology but because of simpler state systems, institutions, and command and technological relationships—it is comprehensible through the reading of a few sources rather than through the reading of the massive amounts of documents we have for any modern war. We can learn about command decisions from reading Caesar's memoirs in a way we cannot from reading Eisenhower's or Patton's, owing to the extraordinary echelons of organization that have developed over time, which in some ways have distanced commanders from the battlefield.

The strategic level of a war changes over time. We can debate now whether Iraq is its own strategy theater or whether strategy for Iraq needs to be considered in the context of the Middle East. Grand strategy is the use of all a state's resources to achieve particular objectives. How and when should it go to war against one power or another? Should it invest more in its army or navy? We can use the ancient classics to introduce students to all the levels of war, from battles up to grand strategy.

Today we generally study structures, processes, and trends, whereas ancient historians studied individual decisions, events, debate, and rhetoric. They studied policy as something that decision-makers made, not as something that inevitably arose from a concatenation of uncontrollable circumstances. These themes are no less relevant today.

In his *Commentaries*, Caesar offers timeless insights into what commanders do on the battlefield. He includes his errors as well as his successes, and one can see that he often lost his battles but won wars. Caesar was sometimes a terrible tactician, but he compensated by how he strung battles together, continuing to maneuver, campaign, and fight when other adversaries would give up; by using speed, surprise, and intelligence as a way of gaining an upper hand. He never underestimated his enemy but rather thought about his enemy as a living force.

We learn from studying ancient history how projecting power throughout the world is a problem that global powers face whether they are Rome or the U.S., both of whom took three to six months to deploy their forces to the Tigris River Valley. These are endemic problems of states: how to deploy and organize their militaries.

Critical Analysis Case Study: Thucydides

Karl Walling of the U.S. Naval War College discussed how one can integrate the study of military history with other liberal arts to make it a more humanistic endeavor, by teaching, for example, Homer's *Iliad* or the Greek tragedies based on Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis deTocqueville distinguishes between what he calls democratic and aristocratic historians. Tocqueville observed that in modern mass democracies, based as they are on universal human equality, historians tended to explain events in terms of abstract forces beyond human control. Concerned that determinism would lead to fatalism among citizens and leaders, Tocqueville saw merit in studying ancient aristocratic history, and most of that history is military/political history.

In *On War*, Clausewitz tried to do for war what Isaac Newton had done for physics. But in war, the force is never proportional, equal, and opposite. War is more art than science. Thus one needs to perform critical analysis, to examine all possible strategies, actions, and decisions. One cannot praise as successful a strategy or the leader who chose it unless it can be shown that the strategy was superior to the available alternatives, or criticize a failed strategy unless it can be shown that there were superior alternatives.

Students can be engaged by "What if" questions: what if Lee had not gone to Gettysburg, if Napoleon had not gone to Moscow, or if he had managed to cross the Channel into England? How might history have been different? This thought experiment disciplines the mind to search for all available options to solve a particular decision-maker's problems, evaluating the costs and risks, and figure out which is best. One part works the imagination, the other teaches rigor.

Walling used the case of the Sicilian Expedition from Thucydides to illustrate how to develop students' critical analysis skills by asking them a question like, since the Athenians were destroyed in Sicily, was this a bad strategy, or did the failure result from poor execution? The survival of democracy, he concluded, depends upon educated citizens and leaders, who understand ranges of options and are trained to seek out the best.

War and Diplomacy

[Angelo Codevilla](#) of Boston University explained how diplomacy and military force are both means to the ends of statecraft. Diplomacy represents realities, military operations create them. Far from being antithetical, the two serve the same political ends. Diplomacy is often thought of as the peaceful alternative, but in fact it serves to prepare as often as to avoid war, which is military operations tailored to achieve one's preferred peace.

The diplomat must figure out whether agreement is possible on the available terms, in which case negotiations can proceed. If the objectives are incompatible, diplomats may "negotiate for side effects," using negotiations to undermine the other side's government, sow dissention among allies, or deceive. The negotiator's job is to judge whether the other side is negotiating for "available terms" or is waging war through diplomatic means.

Too often U.S. diplomats treat negotiations as mutual good-faith searches for agreements. They end up valuing less the substance than the appearance of an agreement, with the result being international agreements that are no such thing. Both sides may interpret today's agreements as they wish-i.e., as if no negotiation had taken place. These make-believe diplomatic successes are guaranteed to turn into real defeats. That is why diplomats add to the word "agreement" the word "framework" or "process." Competent diplomacy requires deciding one's course of action *before* making diplomatic contact rather than during negotiations, and assessing whether they will be better served by offering carrots or sticks. Diplomacy is not about tricks, lies, or bluffs; it is about representing reality in precise words, about warning, not threatening.

War's primordial prerequisite is answering the questions "what are we after, and what are they after?" What is to be our peace, and, because the war will end some day, what might satisfy the other side? You must identify what stands in the way—the people, the institutions—the removal of which will give you the peace you want. Once you have figured that out, you can ask "what will it take?" and design military operations. Diplomats have the option of walking away from their engagements, but once war starts, the options narrow to victory or defeat.

In the course of war, limits you may set on your pursuit of victory are actually limits on your commitment to your

peace. In November 1918 Germany did not imagine the political and economic price that Versailles would impose on it. But, having given up its defenses as the price of armistice, it was at the winners' mercy. Few peoples have ever fought "to the last man." Even the Japanese on Okinawa surrendered once the futility of resistance had become obvious and they noticed that the Americans were sparing captives.

Bad performance by diplomats or generals may foul up a good plan, but no amount of brilliance at the conference table or on the battlefield can rescue a bad plan or make up for neglect of the principles underlying each craft.

Warfare and Technology

Martin Van Creveld of Hebrew University explained that without technology, there would probably have been no war. The first applications of technology to war—flint-made daggers and spears and leather or wickerwork shields—shaped the tactics and strategies adopted by ancient societies, just as horses did during the middle ages and as tanks, aircraft, and various combat ships do today.

Man has always sought to obtain victory by designing better weapons than the enemy's. Flint blades were replaced by copper, simple bows were replaced by long and composite ones, firearms underwent a continuous process of development. But it was rare to win by means of technological superiority, because weapons inevitably fall into the hands of the enemy and are copied. Moreover, war involves intangible factors such as morale, cohesion, and sheer fighting power.

Until 1945, technology drove war without changing its essence, though in the long run war tended to become more powerful. The distances over which operations could be conducted and the speed with which individuals, units, and machines moved about both increased dramatically. Technology enabled war to spread into previously inaccessible environments. For all that, war remained a violent, two-sided activity governed by action and reaction, used as an instrument of politics.

But on August 6, 1945, a vast revolution took place, with the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, which killed 75,000 people and changed the nature of war. Until then, every new weapon development had been met by a technological or tactical development that largely neutralized it—hence why technological progress continued. But there was no effective defense against the atomic bomb. Previously, a victor might suffer Pyrrhic losses but was still assured that his forces and his country would survive. When both sides have nuclear weapons, this no longer applies.

In every region where nuclear weapons have been introduced, large-scale war between countries that possess them has disappeared. The balance of terror has prevailed. War now takes place only between or against third- and fourth-rate powers that do not have nuclear weapons. Nothing that came before or after nuclear weapons, not even missiles and satellites and computers, has had anything like a similar impact.

And yet the American love story with technology persists. Historically, this love story owes to the shortage of skilled labor in a vast continent. Technology was a solution to this. By the middle of the nineteenth century, American technology, including the use of standardized production and interchangeable parts, begun to flood the world, known not so much for its performance as for its production methods, scale, and price. As General Eisenhower put it, it was "Detroit" that won WWII.

By that time, the U.S. was convinced that it would fight outnumbered in any future war and that it required superior firepower. Even as this theory lost much of its force, the notion that the U.S. could not afford as many casualties as its opponents persisted; to compensate, it would rely on its superior technology.

However, when it came to fighting—as opposed to deterring—nuclear-armed opponents, the new weapons were useless. Meanwhile, the populations of non-nuclear countries were still able to challenge the U.S. by engaging in guerrilla warfare, terrorism, or insurgency in mountains, jungles, or swamps, or artificial environments made up of human beings, their dwellings, their means of production, their transport arteries, and their communications. In such complex environments, the most modern, sophisticated technology does not work nearly as well as in simpler ones. Of the U.S.'s four major wars since 1945, Korea ended in a draw, Gulf War I in victory, and Vietnam in defeat, as Gulf War II is likely to. Clearly technology has failed to provide a formula for victory or for waging war against terrorists.

The First Division at War: A Case Study

Col. Paul Herbert used the example of the December 1944 Battle of the Bulge to explain key concepts of warfare such as strategy, operations, and tactics, logistics, and intelligence.

In general, strategy is the overall concept for using military power to achieve one or more political ends; operations are the positioning and movement of major forces to gain advantages over an enemy. Operations translate strategy into practical activity, while tactics is the art of winning battles and engagements. All of these are manifest in campaigns—a planned sequence of engagements intended to lead to a strategic goal—and battles.

By December 1944, the U S Army had been carrying on highly successful offensive operations in Europe since D-Day, June 6, 1944, when the Allies came ashore at Normandy. General Dwight D. Eisenhower at the time and historians since have referred to their "broad-front strategy"—pursuing the Germans toward the western border of Germany with all forces across the entire face of northern France, Belgium, and the Benelux countries.

However, the Germans made a strategic choice to launch a powerful counteroffensive in the Ardennes, where the Allies had slowed down due to their stretched supply lines. (Sustaining one U.S. division in Europe for one day—not attacking, just on the front line—required delivery of 650 tons of fuel, ammunition, repair parts, supplies, replacement vehicles, etc. Logistics, then, play a critical role in strategy and operations.) Hitler marshaled a fairly significant group of armies to seize Antwerp, which was critical to Allied logistics. Hitler planned to attack through the Ardennes, turn north, go all the way to Antwerp and seize it, thus denying its port to the Allies and splitting the British forces in the north from the U.S. forces in the south. This might precipitate a political crisis in which he could negotiate a separate peace in the west.

The Ardennes battle is rife with intelligence and counterintelligence successes and failures by both sides. The Germans attacked when no one thought they could; also, some historians detect hubris among the Allied high command, which thought it had the Germans on the defensive. Hitler played on that by code-naming the counterattack operation *Wacht am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine), which has a defensive connotation. The German surprise represents an intelligence failures on the order of Pearl Harbor, the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam, and 9/11.

On December 16, the First Infantry Division had recently been relieved from heavy fighting in the Hurtgen Forest for its first rest and recuperation since D-Day. That day, they were ordered back to the fight and rushed south in hastily assembled truck convoys and foot marches to occupy critical defensive ground on the northern shoulder of the "bulge" created in Allied lines by the German attack. Here, the division's 26th Infantry Regiment fought tenaciously against successive German tank attacks, constantly adjusting weapons and positions to hold their ground and deny the Germans use of a key highway. Combined with similar heroic stands by other units across the battlefield, this fatally upset the timetable of the German advance.

As Clausewitz observed, no other human activity is so bound up with chance, and guesswork and luck play a great part in war.The story of the 2nd and 99th infantry divisions on the northern shoulder of the bulge from December 16-20, 1944 is one of extraordinary valor, yet nonetheless the German infantry that was supposed to attack those formations and clear the handful of routes through the Hurtgen Forest failed in that effort by only a whisker.

The Battle of the Bulge was the bloodiest of the battles U.S. forces experienced in WWII. Two of the 106th's three regiments were forced to surrender, 8,000 Americans were taken prisoner, and 19,000 killed. Nor were the German objectives realized.[1] Narratives can be developed about battles such as this that show the relationship between strategic choice at the highest political/military levels, operational choice by senior military commanders-"how do I make this happen?"-and tactical choice by lower-level commanders leading to the orders that are given to soldiers to do a certain thing, and the soldiers' performance in the crucible of combat between them and equally brave soldiers under equally compelling orders from the other side.

War and the East

Andrew Wilson of the U.S. Naval War College explained how teaching Asian and Middle Eastern military history introduces students to events that encompasses half the globe and trace back 5,000 years. Moreover, crises in the

Middle East and Central Asia, the rise of China and India, the future of Japan, and the resolution of the Korean stand-off will be defining events of the twenty-first century.

Three models illustrate the diversity of Asian strategic/military traditions: (1) the Chinese model exemplified in *Sun Tzu's Art of War*, (2) the predatory steppe nomad model typified by the Mongols, and (3) the martial ethos of *Bushido* in Imperial Japan.

Sun Tzu's Art of War first appeared in China's Warring States era (403-221 BCE), with the rise of states that were large and lethal enough to vie for mastery over all of China. This was an era of revolutionary military, technological, agricultural, demographic, and social changes. Accordingly, the author of *Sunzi* sought to provide new strategic/military theory, but he was writing for conflicts between symmetrical bureaucratic/agrarian states, not foreseeing the invasion of the horse nomads of the steppe. The Mongols produced so little that they waged war for profit at the expense of peaceful agrarian societies. The stark contrast between Mongol ruthlessness and the *Sunzi*'s rationality makes for a great teaching point.

Modern Japan illustrates the opportunity and danger when states make choices about their strategic and military cultures. Japan's forced opening in the 1850s coincided with revolutions in Western state-making. Following the Meiji restoration, Japan's oligarchy, the *genro*, applied European models to unify the people under a modern, but also "Japanese," monarchy.

To Western military models they added the concept of *Bushido*, the way of the warrior. Historically, Japanese warfare has been highly ritualistic and bloody, and in feudal times the samurai enjoyed an elevated status based on their martial skill and conduct, which was to accord with *Bushido*. The *Bushido* concept proved valuable in Japan's imperial rise, as fanatical devotion to the emperor spurred soldiers and sailors to victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. There were, nonetheless, some hints even then of the self-destructive course Japanese martial culture would take. General Nogi Maresuke, a hero of both these wars, was haunted by the loss of his regimental standard, a gift of the emperor, during the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion. He and his wife committed ritual suicide on the day of the Meiji emperor's funeral in 1912.

By the 1930s, the Meiji oligarchy had died off, leaving lesser men at the helm. Civilian leaders were increasingly cowed by an ultra-nationalist military, and security threats loomed on every front. Japan's martial tradition seemed unfettered by any strategic or political constraints. Japan took Korea to preserve its own security, then moved into Manchuria to protect Korea, then pushed into China and clashed with the Soviets to defend Manchuria. Eventually the Japanese decided to push south, which meant war with the U.S. The rationale behind the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor is the fodder of great debate among students, and the lead-up to Pearl Harbor also demonstrates the difficulties in trying to predict the behavior of an adversary whose risk/benefit calculations are so alien to one's own.

The role that suicide played in modern Japan's military history is a sensitive topic, and teachers will have to judge how or even if they can raise it with their students. However, no other historical case is as rich in material for comparison and contrast to today's suicide terrorism.

War and the West

Williamson Murray, professor emeritus at the Ohio State University, remarked that war, not peace, is humans' natural order of things. Even the *pax Romana* (30 BCE–235 CE)rested on the Roman legionaries who guarded the empire's frontiers. Rome's military success owed to its ability to put highly trained and disciplined forces out on the battlefield. After the collapse of the *pax Romana*, a series of barbarian invasions followed over the next six centuries, and Europeans confronted constant external and internal threats.

The medieval world was in unremitting conflict, with wars among kings, nobles, and knights and mercenaries falling on the backs of the peasants and emerging towns. This period saw the first connections between technological development and military affairs. Armor moved from mail to plate, the quality of steel improved, and in the 14th century gunpowder weapons appeared, providing monarchs with a means to curb the power of the nobility by taking their castles. However, armies still lacked discipline and logistical support. Only the 17th century brought the emergence of the modern state, a military-social revolution that fundamentally changed the economic, political, and

social structure for military organizations. The result was armies and navies we would recognize as like those of our own times in form and discipline. In related "revolutions in military affairs," the Roman legion was deliberately reinvented. Meanwhile, competition for control over the world's oceans pushed the technological development of warships and merchant vessels.

Between 1792 and 1815 two separate military-social revolutions again altered the framework of war: the French Revolution, which decreed that the entire citizenry was to be part of the war effort, and the Industrial Revolution. A fourth military-social revolution combined the French and Industrial Revolutions: the American Civil War was the first modern war, where the state could support the projection of military forces logistically, financially, and on distant battlefields. Unfortunately, too many European generals failed to appreciate the nature of the Union's achievement.

In WWI, the most terrible and influential conflict in history, the explosion of technology presented unprecedented challenges. Both sides were able to assemble immense armies, equipped with the most modern technologies, and then keep them well-supplied in the field. The massive casualties suffered month after month only made the opposing societies more willing to see the war through to its bloody end to justify the losses they had already suffered. WWI fundamentally altered the balance between civilian and military technologies. From 1914 through the end of the Cold War in 1989, military technology drove civil technology. During the interwar years, military organizations pushed the development of technologies like the airplane, radio, and radar that had immense significance for civilians. Operationally, the study of what had happened in WWI permitted revolutions in military affairs: modern combined arms, carrier, and amphibious warfare; and modern logistics, strategic defense, and air defense systems.

Since 1989, we have shifted back to the pre-1914 paradigm: technological developments in the civilian world of computers and communications are now driving military technology. Meanwhile, new post-Cold War challenges have emerged in the form of fundamentalist Islam.

Notes

1. See Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge*, available on line at http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/wwii/7-8/7-8_cont.htm for more on this battle.**[back]**

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